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SUBJECT: DARFUR: JEM HEADS NORTH

REF: A) KHARTOUM 152
B) KHARTOUM 140

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: JEM has fled Muhajarriya and appears to be heading north, according to UNAMID and GOS sources. UNDSS contacts told poloff that they now have unconfirmed reports of fighting between JEM and the GOS near Shangil Tobaya. Although the UNAMID Team Site did report receiving indirect fire on February 4, Muhajarriya has remained relatively calm since the evening of February 4, with no reports of aerial bombardment. END SUMMARY.

JEM MOVES NORTH

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¶2. (SBU) UNAMID situational reports, UNDSS contacts, and the Sudanese Press all stated on February 5 that JEM had left Muhajarriya and was moving north. Both the Governor of South Darfur and the local SAF commander were reported to have visited Muhajarriya. Sudanese Press reported that the Sudanese Armed Forces were "chasing the remaining rebels into the bushes" and added that JEM has fled into the direction of Wada'ah, North Darfur. UNAMID sources stated that the morning of February 5, JEM was seen around the area east of Jebel Marra on the border between North and South Darfur. UNDSS also told poloff at 15:00 local time that they had just received unconfirmed reports of fighting between JEM and the GOS in Shangil Tobaya. Other UNAMID sources stated that the fighting may have been between a faction of SLA/Unity and JEM, although Abdallah Yehia earlier told poloff on February 5 that SLM/Unity's areas of control were stable and calm. (Note: As of 16:30 on February 5, the Zain/mobitel cell phone network in El Fasher was not functioning and has made communication with UNAMID headquarters and other contacts in North Darfur difficult. The Sudanese Government has turned off cellular networks in the past to prevent communication between the rebel movements. End Note.)

MUHAJARRIYA UPDATE

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¶3. (SBU) Government of Sudan (GoS) forces maintain their presence in Muhajarriya, having gained control of the village on February 5. Sudanese Press highlighted that "only one" SAF soldier was killed and nine others were injured while, "the losses of our JEM enemies are still being counted." Press reports emphasize that JEM left behind "ravaged military assets" and a deteriorated humanitarian situation. SLM leader Minnawi told CDA Fernandez on February 4 that JEM had looted many vehicles belonging to his movement in Muhajarriya. In other developments, visiting emboffs to South Darfur reported that they directly saw a delegation of South Darfur State officials (including the Governor and Minister of Finance) board a helicopter traveling from Nyala to Muhajarriya.

¶4. (SBU) UNAMID reporting also stated that on February 4 at approximately 13:00 UNAMID's Team site received indirect fire coming from Muhajarriya's relocated market. As the Nigerian troops were in a defensive position, they could not determine the source or

identity of the attackers. According to UNDSS located in Nyala, many of the IDPs seeking refuge around the TS's perimeter fled during the firefight and have not returned as of February 5. UNDSS and UNAMID reporting both stated that apart from this incident, the situation was relatively calm in Muhajarriya the evening of February 4 and morning of February 5. Additionally, since the evening of February 4, no air strikes have been reported in the vicinity of Muhajarriya.

COMMENT

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¶5. (SBU) It appears as though JEM is on the move to the North, and likely fleeing to the northwest border with Chad. SAF appears to have stopped bombing the area around Muhajarriya and as a result there is relative calm in the village. This should allow UNAMID and UN/OCHA to access Muhajarriya in the coming days to ensure that IDP needs are met, and to assess the degree of destruction caused by JEM and SAF forces. JEM's misadventure into South Darfur appears to have weakened it both militarily and politically, and it remains to be seen whether other rebel groups such as SLA/U, SLA/AW, and SLM/MM will allow JEM forces to pass through their areas of control unimpeded, or if they will be attacked due to a possible alliance of convenience against JEM, as claimed by Minnawi and others. So far, the clearest winner of this particular round is the Khartoum regime. Post will continue to closely monitor the situation and report septel.

FERNANDEZ